



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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SB 440

DATE: March 24, 2022

SPONSOR: Senator Beidle

ASSIGNED TO: Health & Government Operations

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POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT (Department of Health and Human Services)

Commission to Study the Health Care Workforce Crisis in Maryland – Establishment

Senate Bill 440 creates a commission to study the health care workforce crisis in Maryland. The bill directs the Commission to study a host of issues relating to the extent of the workforce shortage, the causes of the shortage, and recommended solutions. Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (MCDHHS) strongly supports Senate Bill 440 and respectfully requests that the bill be amended to require the Commission to also study the barriers confronting foreign-born health professionals and identify career and licensure pathways for refugees and immigrants with education, training, and experience from other nations.

MCDHHS strongly believes this amendment is necessary because of the need to improve access to culturally and linguistically appropriate mental and behavioral health providers for residents across the state. There is a shortage of such providers which has resulted in long wait times for residents to access mental health care from providers who share common cultural backgrounds or who speak languages preferred by those seeking mental health treatment. Research has shown that “[c]ultural and linguistic competence in the delivery of mental health services can have a profound effect on access to and quality of care among ethnic/racial minorities. Vital for the delivery of such services is a diverse workforce that also represents the population.”¹(Internal citations omitted).

The Welcome Back Center of Suburban Maryland, a program of Montgomery County government and part of the national “Welcome Back Center Initiative”², could be a valuable resource to the Commission created by Senate Bill 440, as it is uniquely positioned to provide expertise about the experience of foreign-trained health professionals in attaining educational and licensure credentialing in Maryland and the challenges these professionals face that all too often keep them from practicing in their fields of training.

MCDHHS respectfully urges the Committee to adopt the amendment to study barriers for foreign-born or trained health professionals and issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 440.

¹ Marquine, MJ and Jimenez, D. *Cultural and linguistic proficiency in mental health care: a crucial aspect of professional competence*. Int Psychogeriatr. 2020 Jan; 32(1): 1–3. Accessed at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7755080/>

² The Welcome Back Center of Suburban Maryland is an innovative model that builds on the personal and professional assets of immigrants living in the United States to: further address health professional shortages; diversify the health workforce; provide economic opportunities to underutilized individuals as they return to work in the health field; and enhance health outcomes of the entire community. In 2006, the Latino Health Initiative (Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services) launched The Foreign-Trained Health Professionals Program to facilitate the Maryland health professions licensure process. In 2010, this program became the “Welcome Back Center of Suburban Maryland,” one of several centers comprising the national “Welcome Back Initiative” network. The center provides a comprehensive, integrated and coordinated approach to effectively address the needs and decrease the challenges and barriers foreign-trained health professionals encounter in Maryland in obtaining their licenses. <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Program.aspx?id=OCA/OCAWelcomeB-p482.html>

AMENDMENTS TO SENATE BILL 440

Proposed by Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services

(Third Reading File Bill)

AMENDMENT NO. 1

On page 5 line 19 strike “; and” and substitute “.”.

On page 5 line 25 strike “.” and substitute “; and”, and then insert “(11) examine barriers confronting foreign-born health professionals and identify career and licensure pathways for refugees and immigrants with education, training, and experience from other nations.”